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Can't We All Just Get Along?? The Interagency Process at Work in Information Operations

By

Brian A. Hill  
Major, U.S. Air Force

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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Seminar 6 Moderators:  
Capt Jody Richardson  
Cmdr Paul Povlock  
Mr. Mike Barker

Faculty Advisor:  
Mr. Nicholas Reynolds

The United States military recently adopted an unprecedented strategy to meet the national military objectives of preventing conflict and surprise attacks.<sup>3</sup>

Preemption has taken on new meaning for the Department of Defense (DoD). The commander of Joint Task Force (JTF) Horn of Africa (HOA), Major General Timothy Ghormley, USMC, is leading 1,500 U.S. military personnel in Eastern Africa engaged in a battle without bullets. By attempting to stem the growth of radical Islamic militancy in East Africa, JTF-HOA aims to defeat Al Qaeda before kinetic weapons have to be fired.<sup>4</sup>

He needs more than military resources in order to be successful. Rescuing failed states or those on the brink of failure requires the synchronized talents and efforts of every tool of national power. The diplomatic, economic, and military instruments of power must function in concert with the tool of information. In order for operations to be successful, information operations (IO) must be synchronized from the strategic level to the tactical level. Accurate, consistent, and timely information must not only flow vertically from the highest levels of government, it has to move quickly across distinct governmental agencies playing critical roles in national security. Despite dissimilar methods of communication and information sharing, interagency partners have discovered informal ways to effectively collaborate and share information in contingencies. Ad hoc interagency coordination at the operational level is insufficient to meet comprehensive governmental objectives. The need to craft unique information operations campaigns in different regions of the world requires formalized methods for interagency partners to interact.

This paper will offer operational commanders methods to leverage interagency capabilities to bolster information operations at the operational level. First, it will analyze a historical case of ad hoc, albeit successful, interagency information operations in Haiti in 1994. There, the flexibility and agility of U.S. forces and interagency partners were tested. As the 21st century dawned with new threats and new methods of non-kinetic engagement, the IO and interagency areas have grown in stature. This essay also includes an analysis of the current IO environment. It will offer proposals for effective interagency structure to provide IO collateral benefits at the operational level.

When the United States decided to engage the illegitimate Haitian government through military operations, the complexity of the interagency coordination required among the government's key players was unprecedented. At the strategic level, the National Security Council (NSC) managed the interagency process effectively. As cause for concern in Haiti heightened in early 1994, a standing Haiti Interagency Working Group (IWG) was formed to assess the interests of governmental departments and agencies in Haitian affairs. The IWG laid the foundation for follow-on work by the Principals Committee (PC), Deputies Committee (DC), and Executive Committee (ExCom). Each organization worked to gain measurable levels of consensus and coordination in crafting America's response to events in Haiti. The Department of Defense (DoD) was initially reluctant to support the option of military force in Haiti. The nation of Haiti, with a population of 8.3 million and a total area comparable to Maryland, did not pose a military threat to the United States. However, military options became more popular throughout the government as diplomatic and

economic measures failed to bring the U.S. closer to its objectives in Haiti: restoration and sustainment of the democratic process. Events in Haiti helped highlight the revolution in military affairs after the fall of the Soviet Union at the dawn of the 21st century: the military instrument of power was a viable option in an era when no clear-cut military threat to the United States existed. In 1994, the emerging legitimate democratic processes of government were severely threatened in Haiti. The potential consequences resulting from a collapse of the fledgling Haitian democracy were enough to warrant American military intervention. DoD soon accepted the fact that military options for Haiti needed development. Outside of Washington, the operational-level coordination of a plan to put forces on the ground in Haiti began to take shape. The successful interagency coordination achieved at the strategic level was not fully realized at the operational stage. Operational Plan (OPLAN) 2370, the military plan for forcible entry and sustainment of U.S. units into Haiti to defeat the Forces Armées d'Haïiti (FAd'H), and to restore and maintain the democratic process there was approved in June of 1994. Lieutenant General Hugh Shelton, the JTF-180 Commander, and his staff were well versed in the machinations and finer points of the plan. Outside of DoD, critical information regarding OPLAN 2370 was practically non-existent. The compartmentalization of the combat planning process within United States Atlantic Command (USACOM) meant that interagency partners such as the Department of Justice were not privy to details of the plan that required their coordination. Added to this was the fact that the President and Secretary of Defense were not committed to a combat plan of forcible entry into Haiti. Invariably, other options had to be pursued.

The requirement to give political leaders more military options in Haiti led to the late development of OPLAN 2380; it was an OPLAN based on the slim possibility that American military forces could enter Haiti under permissible conditions. The lower classification of the plan enabled limited interagency coordination to occur at levels below the National Security Council among the players who would actually represent their departments and agencies. According to COMUSACOM, Admiral Miller, the interagency planning meetings did not live up to his expectations.<sup>5</sup> These shortcomings would eventually place an enormous burden on the JTF staff during execution of Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, and contributed to less than optimal interagency offensive information operations in the field.

By June of 1994 the likelihood of military operations in Haiti increased to the point that President Clinton publicly acknowledged his willingness to commit forces to Haiti even under forcible entry rules of engagement (ROE). Reports from United Nations observers in Haiti detailed heightened political violence and human rights violations, widespread poverty, and an alarming increase in citizens fleeing Haitian shores for refuge in the United States. Offensive information operations accelerated over the course of the summer as perception management actions took on increased importance. At the strategic level, a Military Information Support Team (MIST) was established in Washington, D.C. The goal of the MIST was to create an informational environment in support of US objectives to restore democracy to Haiti, to allow President Aristide to present a message of reconciliation to his constituents and to outline plans for his return to power. The MIST was comprised of soldiers from the 4th Psychological Operations Group (Airborne) and Creole speaking civilian linguists

from the U.S. State Department.<sup>6</sup> To address the growing migration problem, products were developed to help stem the flow of Haitian citizens leaving the island for the United States. The MIST coordinated radio broadcasts and also produced media products that were airdropped into Haiti before U.S. forces arrived.

Many of the interagency organizations that would play prominent roles in the Haitian operation were left out of any substantive planning coordination for reasons ranging from choice to limited planning staffs. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), and the State Department's International Criminal Investigation and Training Program (ICITAP) had very important roles to play in the Haitian operation that were not fully developed in planning. One notable exception, according to Admiral Miller, was the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) which coordinated closely with DoD planners to clarify responsibilities and capabilities.<sup>7</sup> The opportunity to exploit the informational capabilities of interagency organizations on the ground was never addressed during the development of OPLAN 2380. The creation of an interagency planning cell (IPC) at USACOM helped facilitate coordination among myriad government agencies tasked in Haiti. Because Haiti is in the same time zone as Washington, the cell was effective in assisting INS, ATF, and ICITAP.

Offensive information operations took on greater importance when U.S. forces arrived in Haiti in September of 1994. The circumstances surrounding the insertion of American military forces to begin Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY provide

compelling evidence for the value of timely, effective interagency information operations at the operational level.

Former President Carter's success in deescalating the political situation in Haiti from combat to peacekeeping and democratic restoration through diplomatic means tested the agility of DoD. When the call came to transition from the forced entry to plan to the permissible entry plan, the nature of the mission changed significantly. Offensive information operations up to that point focused on support of combat operations by convincing Haiti's military that resistance against the U.S. military was useless. With a new mission and change of focus, the Joint Psychological Operations Task Force (JPOTF) transitioned to a mission of facilitating civil order, minimizing Haitian-on-Haitian violence, and publicizing the pending relief efforts. The compartmentalized planning during the development of the separate OPLANs caused significant friction in the first several weeks of the Haitian campaign as the forcible entry cell under the leadership of the XVIII Airborne Corps gave way to the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, which led the permissive entry campaign as JTF-190. Special operations forces under the JPOTF sought to influence the population through the combined production and distribution of tools like leaflets and radio broadcasts. Conventional forces executed a more overt offensive information operations campaign through the Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) under the direct leadership of the JTF Commander. The CMOC coordinated the humanitarian efforts of the military and was tasked to interface with interagency partners to promote unity of effort. Key to the operational level information operations campaign was coordination to reach the population through NGOs, PVOs and other groups with valuable knowledge operating



in Haiti. The highest levels of U.S. military command appreciated the vital role NGOs and PVOs could play in the Haiti campaign. CJCS General Shalikashvili stated, *“What’s the relationship between a just-arrived military force and the NGOs and PVOs that might have been working in a crisis-torn area all along? What we have is a partnership. If you are successful, they are successful, and if they are successful, you are successful. We need each other.”*<sup>8</sup>

More than 400 NGOs and PVOs were operating in Haiti in 1994; some had been in country for more than one year. Their ability to help prepare the population for arrival of American troops could have proved beneficial. Unfortunately, the JTF Commander’s focal point for conducting in-country interagency affairs, civil affairs, was in disarray for the first several weeks of the operation.<sup>9</sup> The focus and responsibility of the Haitian campaign shifted from combat operations under JTF-180 to stabilization, reconstruction, and humanitarian assistance under the leadership of JTF-190. One of the secondary effects of this last-minute change was a major logistical problem. The delay in standing up a fully functioning CMOC negatively impacted the development of critical interpersonal relationships with interagency partners uniquely positioned to aid in promoting the information operations campaign among the Haitian population.

The need to instill trust and earn the confidence of the Haitian population was an essential task for the JTF Commander. The United States was viewed by many native Haitians as an evil imperialist, the result of its prior Haitian occupation in the early 1900’s.<sup>10</sup> The negative perceptions from America’s previous foray into Haiti, a

reluctance to use any term related to nation-building, and lessons learned from operations in Somalia and Rwanda were the foundation for the civic action plans in Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY. Limited involvement was the tenet reflected in the humanitarian assistance portions of OPLANS 2370 and 2380. Three questions had to be answered in order for a humanitarian action to gain the approval of the JTF Commander: 1) will it gain support for the legitimate government; 2) will it benefit a cross section of the population and not just the elites; and 3) can US forces leave a system in place to reasonably sustain it?<sup>11</sup> A critical sensitivity of many NGOs in Haiti was their aversion to any perception that they operated under the thumb of the American military. Because many would choose to sever ties with the armed forces rather than risk losing the trust of the population, flexibility on both sides was necessary. JTF-190 stood up a Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Center (HACC) which was located a significant distance away from the JTF HQ where the CMOC was based. The HACC was a valuable tool in facilitating interagency dialogue, coordination and information sharing. It provided a measure of security to NGOs and PVOs who felt threatened by the headquarters environment and gave them more freedom to share information and also seek it from the military. Both sides of the interagency partnership saw distinct advantages in this construct. Interagency successes in the information operations campaign were achieved by overcoming significant challenges and obstacles.

Assurances to Haitian citizens that American forces were in their country to restore order, ensure the safe return of their democratically elected leader, and assist those in need formed the crux of the military IO campaign. It was threatened by

incidents on the ground on two notable occasions. On D+3, September 22nd, any positive perception of America as an enforcer of peace and fairness to all Haitians was cast into doubt due to a reluctance to commit U.S. forces to civic actions. Haiti's military coup leaders enforced peace on the streets of Haiti through the FAd'H, a force that regularly committed human rights violations against its own citizens. The force served as a visible symbol of the population's inability to affect its government and improve its impoverished condition. In order to win the confidence of the downtrodden populous, American forces had to strip the FAd'H of its powers, both real and perceived. In order to do this, ROE for JTF-180 and JTF-190 troops had to allow engagement to prevent Haitian-on-Haitian human rights abuses. There were lengthy discussions prior to the start of the operation at the strategic level regarding the roles that Americans would play in Haitian domestic affairs. The need to appear neutral and keep troops on the periphery of internal domestic issues superseded any need to confront Haitian-on-Haitian violence with force. However, when American forces landed in Haiti, with national and world media outlets at their side, reality quickly forced a reassessment of the ROE. Acts of Haitian-on-Haitian violence occurred while troops stood by, unable to intervene. Images of helpless civilians tormented by a corrupt police force as the world's greatest power stood by impotent to enforce law and order jeopardized the credibility of the entire mission in the eyes of the world and the Haitian population. The theater-strategic leadership appreciated the incongruity between America's message sent via radio and leaflets and the images on the ground. At USACOM, the ROE for U.S. troops was quickly restructured to allow intervention to prevent human rights violations against the population. This important

display of flexibility and responsiveness promoted unity of effort for all of the U.S. government agencies in Haiti. The Haitian population had to be convinced that American troops were on their soil to liberate them and aid in their nation's development. Aligning the actions of U.S. forces with the overall strategic information operations campaign was critical to the success of the operation.

The potential for military operations other than war (MOOTW) to escalate towards combat is very real. Escalation is costly in terms of resources, support and treasure. When Marine Lieutenant Chris Palumbo engaged his platoon against FAd'H forces in Cap-Haitien on the 24th of September, American forces quickly faced the potential for escalation. Despite the last-minute shift from a forced entry, combat operation to peacekeeping operations, the reaction of FAd'H forces to American troops was uncertain. During a routine patrol in Haiti's second city, Marines under the lead of Lt Palumbo opened fire on a group of FAd'H troops who tried to intimidate them by pointing weapons in their direction. News of the bloody engagement spread quickly throughout Haiti, the United States, and the world. The risks of inflaming the FAd'H to take up arms, alienating the Haitian population, and inflaming a negative reaction from America and the world were elevated. The effectiveness of a sound and agile information operations campaign was demonstrated by the response of the JTF leadership. General Shelton promptly capitalized on the event as a demonstration of the MNF commitment to Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY and its resolve to defend its troops and Haitian civilians. Outside of Haiti, the Clinton administration publicly voiced support for the Marines' actions. This high-level backing helped to sustain public support for the intervention forces.<sup>12</sup> Even more critical to the operation

was the reaction inside of Haiti. The general Haitian population understood this action to be a display of the strength and resolve of American forces. The FAd'H resistance was effectively broken and throughout the nation citizens were convinced that American troops were there to defend them.<sup>13</sup> Careful attention to crafting a proper informational response to the FAd'H engagement both inside and outside of Haiti helped to deescalate the situation, maintain public support, and made the country more stable and safer for future Multi-National Force (MNF) operations.

The JTF-180 and JTF-190 JPOTF and CMOC elements were significant operational-level information operations force multipliers in Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY.<sup>14</sup> By displaying flexibility, agility, and innovation to meet the demands of the mission, the JPOTF and CMOC helped the military commanders achieve their goals. Also important was the interagency unity of effort which enabled the information operations campaign to be a force multiplier throughout Haiti. Employing a strategy of cooperativeness by reaching out to NGOs and other U.S. governmental entities helped stem the flow of immigrants and eliminate large weapons caches. Despite significant planning and logistical shortfalls, effective interagency processes at the operational level established the MNF's legitimacy as a restorer and protector of Haitian democratic freedoms. As the 20th century drew to a close, America's experiences in Haiti, Panama, Rwanda, Somalia, the Balkans and other complex contingency operations highlighted weaknesses in the interagency process at the operational level. Presidential Decision Directive 56 formalized many processes at the strategic level; unfortunately, more work was needed to address shortcomings for

operational commanders. As a result, initiatives to increase interagency unity of effort hit full stride in 2005.

Full spectrum information operations are at the top of DoD's 21st century transformation list. The Quadrennial Defense Review of 2005 addresses the importance of interagency information sharing and cooperation in support of military operations.<sup>15</sup> A commitment to share information with agencies of the government to maintain information superiority in any contingency is a logical evolution in light of the role that interagency operations play in contingencies. Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 3600.1, the revision still in draft, provides a solid framework toward achieving effective interagency IO. It calls for a number of processes to promote effective interagency information operations at the strategic and theater strategic levels of policy, including: 1) delineating among core capabilities, supporting capabilities, and related capabilities; 2) giving responsibility for interagency information operations to an undersecretary of defense, and 3) calling for the integration of IO into Theater Security Cooperation Plans (TSCP). The DoD IO roadmap, released in 2003, provided a framework for understanding IO and also critiqued the state of IO at the beginning of the 21st century. As a sign of Secretary Rumsfeld's commitment to transform IO to a core military competency as quickly as possible, the roadmap was declassified after its initial release to reach a wider audience, including DoD's interagency partners. The importance of dominating the information spectrum at all levels of U.S. government operations drove the development of the roadmap.<sup>16</sup> A significant interagency coordination effort involves the relationship of DoD's psychological operations (PSYOP) and public affairs (PA)

to the State Department's public diplomacy efforts. In any given interagency operation, PSYOP messages historically focus on influencing a foreign audience where the operation takes place, PA media releases center on the U.S. population and public diplomacy efforts are targeted on U.S. allies and neighbors. Advanced global communications and simplified means of access to a variety of information sources mean that audiences can easily receive messages from multiple sources. Therefore, it is imperative that all U.S. government agencies present consistent messages to their audiences for operational credibility.<sup>17</sup> The order to delegate more IO execution authority to combatant commanders will allow them to more effectively synchronize IO efforts throughout all phases of contingencies at the operational level.

Awareness of the requirement for our government to function more effectively as an interagency instrument is not new. The disparate approaches to problem solving institutionalized among the agencies of U.S. government have created significant operational friction and tension for decades.<sup>18</sup> As a result of the need to skillfully combine the tools of national power at the operational level, the approach and vigor with which interagency coordination is now pursued can indeed be considered novel. Prior to 2002, interagency cooperation at the operational level occurred mainly on an ad hoc basis, as in Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY. The DoD, INS, ATF, and ICITAP formed effective partnerships inside Haiti in order to accomplish their missions. On the humanitarian side, the CMOCs and HACCs helped forge critical relationships with various NGOs operating on behalf of the Haitian population. These interagency partnerships were formed and sustained only through the spirit of cooperativeness that existed among the members of the organizations. At that time, no

doctrine existed to guide the processes of interaction. The current strategic environment where finite national resources, increased breadth of enemy engagement, and speed necessary for effective decision-making has made ad hoc interagency coordination obsolete as a principle of operations. The bridge to link combatant commanders to interagency partners can be strengthened in the form of Joint Interagency Cooperation Groups (JIACGs). Information operations at the operational level would experience a significant collateral benefit with continued development and further refinement of the JIACG concept.

The JIACG was created by USCENTCOM in response to former CJCS General Richard Myers' order to integrate operations throughout all phases of contingencies, from planning and war to security, stability, and reconstruction.<sup>19</sup> The first JIACG was a Joint Interagency Task Force for Counterterrorism (JIATF-CT). Under the charge of General Tommy Franks and the direct guidance of Brigadier General Gary Harrell, USA, the JIATF-CT was allotted 30 military billets and as many interagency positions that it could successfully recruit. After thorough analysis by Gen Harrell and his staff to tailor the task force to meet theater needs, members of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Diplomatic Security Service, Customs Service, NSA, Defense Intelligence Agency, Defense Human Intelligence Service, New York's Joint Terrorism Task Force, and other representatives from the Justice, Treasury, and State Departments served on JIATF-CT. At its most robust the JIATF-CT comprised 36 military and 57 interagency partners who willingly shared expertise and resources to achieve significant success in intelligence gathering, border security and biometric



identification in Afghanistan.<sup>20</sup> When General Myers visited Afghanistan in early 2002, the success of JIATF-CT was validated when he remarked, “this is exactly what the Secretary and I had in mind.”<sup>21</sup> The argument can be made that in the immediate wake of the terrorist attacks in September of 2001, the interagency spirit of cooperation was exceptionally high. Identifying agencies that were willing to offer personnel and resources to help fight the new Global War on Terrorism was not difficult with the images of destruction and hatred in New York, the Pentagon, and Pennsylvania fresh in the minds of most Americans. The challenge, therefore, to DoD and other agencies of the United States government is to find durable ways to achieve interagency process success in a steady-state operational environment, not only in crises. Regional combatant commanders (RCC) can promote interagency unity of effort in the area of information operations.

First, RCCs should have the ability to tailor the requirements of their respective commands’ JIACGs. The decision by Secretary Rumsfeld to fund positions from the State Department, FBI’s Counter-Terrorism Division, and the Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control to augment the JIACGs of every combatant command represents a significant breakthrough in interagency growth. An unintentional secondary effect of this decision is the high potential for less enthusiastic participation from agencies that do not get reimbursed by DoD yet are asked to provide personnel and resources to JIACGs.<sup>22</sup> The distinct nature of every geographic theater of responsibility means that the interagency requirements of RCCs will differ. Encouraging and allowing RCCs to custom design their JIACGs will help them to

better accomplish theater security goals and better posture their commands for engagements that do not include armed conflict.

In addition to bolstering the effectiveness of the JIACGs, Theater Security Cooperation Plans (TSCPs) must be developed in concert with respective ambassadors' mission performance plans (MPPs). Linking the TSCPs and MPPs is necessary because the State Department serves as the lead agency in executing foreign policy. There is no guarantee that future contingency operations will include a phase of major combat engagement whereby DoD leads and then transitions to a secondary role in stabilization under the leadership of another government agency. In fact, TSCPs function to minimize potential escalation toward combat operations. Because of the importance of sound information operations in the new Phase 0 of shaping, interagency coordination must be more than an annex in the TSCP. Information sharing between the combatant command planning staff's TSCP and the State Department country team's MPP will bolster unity of effort. The capability to adopt the preceding recommendations rests with operational commanders. Building on initiatives currently undertaken by DoD and its interagency partners, the benefits to theater-strategic and operational level IO are plentiful. Though the potential for more effective operational IO through interagency cooperation is plausible, relevant counter-arguments must also be addressed.

It might be argued that the traditional methods of decision-making among the various agencies of government make realistic progress towards interagency cooperation an untenable goal. DoD's adherence to systematic deliberate planning,

the State Department's desire for flexibility, and the CIA's reluctance to share information due to concerns about security exemplify the insurmountable obstacles our government faces.<sup>23</sup> This challenge can be met and overcome at the operational level. The focused leadership of RCCs who are willing to engage interagency partners in a spirit of cooperation will set the stage for process improvement. Interagency unity of command may not be possible, but unity of effort is very achievable. Improvements in methods of communication to enhance interoperability are facilitating horizontal interagency coordination. DoD's decision to expand the access to the secret Internet protocol router network to more interagency partners is helping to create common information sharing structure among government agencies.

Defense leaders continue to strive to create interagency environments that promote legitimacy, build DoD's credibility, and foster transparency. The ability to leverage the power of effective interagency information operations at the theater-strategic and operational levels of planning and execution proved to be a significant force multiplier in Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY. The 21st century strategic environment which aims to build capacity and sustain security of our allies requires more formal interagency processes at the operational level. In addition to conducting deliberate planning with interagency partners, allowing commanders flexibility in structuring theater interagency coordination groups lays a solid foundation for success. Coordinating the development of TSCPs and MPPs will promote information sharing between DoD combatant commands and State Department country teams. Greater interagency IO success will be achieved when the processes of planning and execution are formalized throughout DoD's geographic combatant commands.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Nat'l Mil Strat pg 9
  - <sup>2</sup> Brandon pg 1
  - <sup>3</sup> Nat'l Mil Strat pg 9
  - <sup>4</sup> Brandon pg 1
  - <sup>5</sup> Ballard pg 82
  - <sup>6</sup> Friedman pg 2
  - <sup>7</sup> Ballard pg 82
  - <sup>8</sup> Wilkins pg 21
  - <sup>9</sup> Wilkins pg 17
  - <sup>10</sup> Ballard pgs 26-29
  - <sup>11</sup> Wilkins pg 20
  - <sup>12</sup> Ballard pgs 115-116
  - <sup>13</sup> Ibid
  - <sup>14</sup> USACOM Joint After Action Report Chap 4
  - <sup>15</sup> Krepinevich pg i
  - <sup>16</sup> DoD IO Roadmap pg 3
  - <sup>17</sup> DoD IO Roadmap pg 25
  - <sup>18</sup> Tucker pg 66
  - <sup>19</sup> Bogdano pg 10
  - <sup>20</sup> Ibid
  - <sup>21</sup> Bogdano pg 13
  - <sup>22</sup> Bogdano pg 14
  - <sup>21</sup> Tucker pg 66

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